Aultmore Wind Farm Redesign

Newsletter Spring 2024

Ray Wind Farm near Otterburn in Northumberland.

Project submitted into planning

Project background

Over the last few years Vattenfall has been redesigning its Aultmore Wind Farm proposal to maximise the project's contribution to net zero carbon emissions targets and tackling climate change.

We have now submitted the project into planning and this newsletter provides information on how to view the application and comment on the proposal.

The site lies approximately 6km north of Keith and 7km south of Buckie and was originally consented in 2014 by Moray Council as a 13-turbine 29MW scheme.

The new redesigned 16-turbine 105.6MW proposal, which utilises modern 200m turbines and includes battery energy storage technology, could generate **enough fossil free electricity annually for around 117,000 homes**[1], almost four times that of the original scheme's 22,000 homes.

The project is also predicted to **offset approximately 177,000 tonnes of carbon emissions**[2] each year and achieve **carbon payback within 1.3 years**[2] (compared to a fossil fuel mix of electricity generation).

In addition, Aultmore Wind Farm would deliver a **community benefit fund worth around £18.4 million**[3] over the project's 35-year operational life cycle as well as over **£1.3 million in business rates each year**[4] to Moray Council.

We are also in dialogue with **Buckie Harbour** to explore the feasibility of turbine components arriving at Buckie (rather than Inverness) should the harbour be able to accommodate larger vessels in the future.

117,000 homes
Fossil free electricity for 117,000 homes each year

£18.4 million
in community benefit over 35-year life cycle

177,000 tonnes
Offsetting 177,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year

1.3 years
Carbon payback achieved in 1.3 years for manufacture, construction, operation and decommissioning

£1.3 million
Over £1.3 million in business rates to Moray Council each year

The project is also expected to deliver biodiversity enhancement, improved access and recreation opportunities, contracts and employment for the local supply chain, apprenticeships for the young workforce, and an opportunity for the community to invest in the project.

VATTENFALL

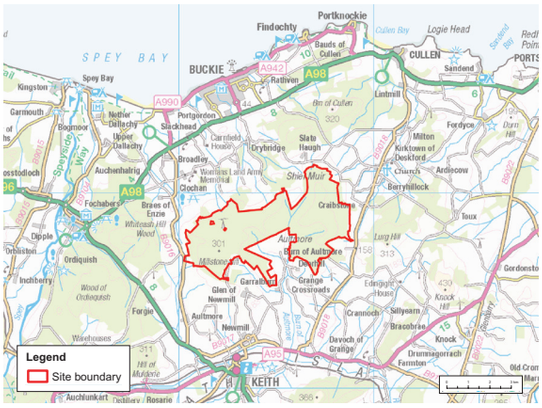
How to view the application and comment

Overview

The Section 36 application has been submitted to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) under the Electricity Act 1989.

The proposal lies outwith any national or international landscape or ecological designations – in an area predominantly used for commercial forestry.

The site has long been identified as suitable for wind power generation and lies within an area "likely to be most appropriate for onshore windfarms" within Moray Council's Local Development Plan Spatial Framework.



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Planning documentation

A number of planning documents accompany the planning application – including an extensive **Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)** as follows:

- EIAR Volume 1: Chapters (assessment work undertaken and potential effects)
- EIAR Volume 2: Figures (drawings and maps)
- EIAR Volume 3: Visualisations (wirelines and photomontages)
- EIAR Volume 4: Technical appendices (data)

In addition to the EIAR, the planning documentation also includes a **Non-Technical Summary** (which summarises the application and key EIAR findings), a **Pre-Application Consultation (PAC)** Report (which summarises the consultation undertaken), and a **Planning Statement** (which sets out the planning policy context).

Viewing the application

The application and associated documentation can be viewed online via:

- Aultmore project website at **www.vattenfall.co.uk/aultmore**
- ECU's planning portal at **www.energyconsents.scot** under application reference ECU00003365

Hard copies can also be viewed in the local area at the following locations.

Cullen Library, Seafield Road, Cullen, AB56 4AF

Tuesday: 2pm – 5pm and 6pm – 8pm
Thursday: 2pm – 5pm and 6pm – 8pm
Saturday: 10am – 12 noon

Buckie Library, 7 Cluny Place, Buckie, AB56 1HB

Monday: 10am – 8pm
Tuesday: 10am – 5pm
Wednesday: 10am – 8pm
Thursday: 10am – 5pm
Saturday: 10am – 12 noon

Clochan Community Centre, Clochan, Buckie, AB56 5HS

Tuesday: 9am – 12 noon

King Memorial Hall, Grange, Keith, AB55 6SL

Telephone hall contact on 07710 233577 between 9am and 5pm to arrange viewing/obtain opening hours.

Copies of the planning documentation, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) may be obtained from Vattenfall by contacting Lucy Blake, Project Manager, at **lucy.blake@vattenfall.com** or on 01736 335857, free of charge on DVD/CD/USB stick or at a charge of £1,500 for complete hard copies.

Commenting on the application

A statutory consultation period will be held by the ECU to enable the public and key consultees to submit formal representations. These representations will then be assessed against the proposal and a determination made by Scottish Ministers in due course.

Representations on the proposal can be submitted to the ECU in the following ways:

- Via the **planning portal** at www.energyconsents.scot/Register.aspx
- Via **email** to representations@gov.scot
- Via **post** by writing to Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit, 4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

Written or emailed representations should identify the proposal and specify the grounds for representation. They should also be dated, clearly state the name (in block capitals), and confirm the full return email or postal address of those making representation. Only representations sent by email will receive acknowledgement.

All representations should be received not later than 16th April 2024, although Ministers may consider representations received after this date.

Why we still need onshore wind

The planet is warming

Whilst we have made considerable progress over the last decade, transitioning to renewables and de-carbonising our economy, it's not happening fast enough.

The earth's climate has always changed and evolved throughout history. However, the current rate of global warming has not been seen in the last 10,000 years[5] and 'human activities have raised the atmosphere's carbon dioxide content by 50% in less than 200 years'[6] (NASA).

In December last year at COP28 in Dubai, over 120 countries, including the UK, pledged to treble their renewable capacity[7] in efforts to keep global warming from rising more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and within 2°C by the end of the century.

Just a couple of months later, in February, it was reported by The European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Services that global warming had, for the first time, exceeded the critical 1.5°C for a whole year – making 2023 the hottest year on record since global records started in 1850[8].

Climate change is affecting our daily lives

We are all now beginning to witness the effects of climate change. Globally, we are seeing more frequent extreme weather events such as floods, severe storms, soaring temperatures and droughts.

'Habitats are suffering; sea levels are rising, the artic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying, and forests are burning' (UN).

Countries across the world, including the UK, recognise that action must be taken, and fundamental changes made to decarbonise the way that we live and work if we are to tackle climate change. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and increasing our renewable energy generation from sources like onshore wind is a vital part of this.

We must utilise our renewable resources

Scotland has some of the best wind resource in Europe. Onshore wind is one of the most established renewable technologies, giving it a crucial role in helping decarbonise our energy needs.

We currently have 14GW of operational onshore wind in the UK with 9GW of this in Scotland. It is estimated that by 2030, 30GW of onshore wind will be required across the UK to meet our climate change targets at the lowest cost to the consumer. As part of this, the Scottish Government's ambition is to double Scotland's onshore wind capacity to 20GW by 2030[9].

Onshore wind has a critical role to play

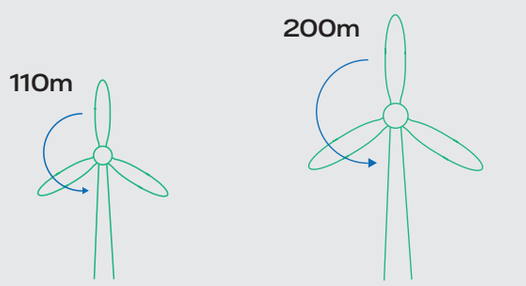
Turbine technology has leapt forward in the last few years, and the industry has worked hard to bring costs down. We're now able to build much more efficient sites meaning that new onshore wind farms, with modern turbines like those proposed at Aultmore, are one of the cheapest ways to generate electricity in the UK.

Once consented, onshore wind is also quicker to build than, for example, offshore wind and helps increase energy security by reducing reliance on imports.

Advancements in energy storage solutions mean that sites can now generate significantly greater outputs and offset much greater levels of carbon emissions. As such, optimising sites like Aultmore could play an important role in the transition to a greener, low-carbon economy.

If approved, the redesigned Aultmore Wind Farm will not only help towards climate targets, energy security, and consumer bills, but will also deliver economic benefits – including an £18.4[4] million community benefit fund for the local area over its 35-year operational life cycle.

A single rotation can generate enough electricity to power a UK home for:



Consented Aultmore Wind Farm
2.2MW
4.8 hours

Redesigned Aultmore Wind Farm
6.6MW
21.5 hours

Turbines not to scale

Key design considerations

Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm in South Wales.

Turbine layout and visibility

Whilst the visual impact of a wind farm may appear to be subjective, there are clear planning guidelines and principles that need to be applied when designing a wind farm proposal.

Specialist landscape architects have critically assessed the design to ensure that the best layout possible is achieved from a visual perspective. A Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) has also been undertaken for properties within 2km of the turbine locations to assess and mitigate any potential impact.

Private water supplies

We are aware that private water supplies (PWS) are an area of particular concern to local residents – and we take the protection of people's supplies seriously. We have gathered detailed information on private water supplies from SEPA, Moray Council, site walkover studies and engagement with residents – and made changes to the design in order to avoid any impacts during construction.

Should the project receive consent, water quality monitoring is proposed during construction at all properties which have a PWS source linked to the proposed development. We will also liaise with the water authorities and regulators throughout the construction and operational phases of the project.

Noise

The proposed development has been carefully designed and the turbines located sufficiently far from residential properties that predicted noise levels will fall within noise regulations. Should consent be granted we would expect the authorities to impose noise-related conditions on the wind farm during its operational life.

Shadow flicker

The impact of shadow flicker can be easily avoided and designed out using sophisticated modelling software to control turbine operation. Shadow flicker control modules, consisting of light sensors and specialised software, will be installed on the turbines to prevent operation during periods when shadow flicker could be experienced at nearby properties.

Aviation lighting

We have agreed a reduced lighting scheme with the Civil Aviation Authority which will consist of steady red lights on nine of the sixteen turbines and infra-red lighting on fifteen of the sixteen turbines. By its nature, aviation lighting is designed to be seen by aircraft passing at height and therefore is directed upwards and much less visible to those close by and at ground level.

Peatland restoration Clashindarroch, Aberdeenshire.

Clashindarroch Wind Farm near Huntly in Aberdeenshire.

Ecology and ornithology

Detailed EIA surveys have been undertaken to explore the ecology, ornithology, flora, fauna and overall biodiversity to ensure that we have a thorough understanding of the site and surrounding area. The findings from this survey work, in addition to engagement with key consultees such as RSPB and NatureScot, have helped inform the design – and turbine infrastructure has been relocated to avoid impacts on key species or habitats.

Peat and biodiversity

Aultmore is not a particularly peaty site and the peat that does exist is mostly degraded due to 60-years or so of commercial forestry operations. Nevertheless, extensive peat-probing has been undertaken on the site to avoid and/or minimise impacts on peat wherever possible through our design.

There are a couple of areas of deep peat on site which offer significant potential for habitat improvement and we are proposing to restore such areas of degraded deep peat and return them back to bog. This work will not only help protect the peat itself and enhance the habitat for wildlife, but will also result in a net positive impact and likely net gain in biodiversity.

Traffic and transport

The original proposed site access point, for the main construction traffic and turbine deliveries from the B9016, was via the Mains of Oxhill.

As the redesigned scheme developed, the access point changed in response to both technical considerations and community feedback. The new proposed access point from the B9016 is now located approximately 100m north of the Croft of Ryeriggs and the new bellmouth junction has been designed to comply with road safety regulations.

Turbine deliveries would be undertaken in consultation with the relevant authorities and deliveries scheduled where possible to avoid peak times of the day including school opening/closing times, peak summer tourist season and Broadley Crematorium's core hours.

Further detail on any of these key design considerations can be found in our Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which accompanies the planning application (see page 2 of this newsletter for details of how to view the EIAR).

Local benefit

Aultmore Wind farm Community Benefit Workshop.

Socioeconomic benefit

Onshore wind farm projects like the redesigned Aultmore proposal have the potential to deliver significant benefit to the area in many forms, not least socioeconomically.

Delivering socioeconomic benefit from the project to the local area was also the greatest topic of interest in the feedback received from our pre-application consultation events in 2022 and 2023. It accounted for around 25% of total feedback, with the majority of comments focusing on the opportunities associated with community benefit.

Further detail on the feedback received can be found in the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report which accompanies our planning application and summarises the consultation undertaken.

Community benefit

Vattenfall follows the prevailing Scottish Government's guidelines on community benefit of £5,000 per megawatt of installed capacity. Based on the redesigned 16-turbine proposal, the 105.6MW scheme could deliver a community benefit fund of around £528,000[4] each year to the local community, amounting to around £18.44 million over the wind farm's 35-year operational life cycle. The area of benefit would be established in consultation with the community, should the scheme receive consent.

We held a community benefit workshop in September which was attended by representatives from 18 different anchor organisations including seven local Community Councils. The workshop was held in response to feedback and explored how a potential community benefit fund may operate as well as the benefits that it could deliver for the local area. The report can be viewed on our project website at **www.vattenfall.co.uk/aultmore**.

Shared ownership

We are also offering local communities and organisations the opportunity to invest in the project itself. Investing in an onshore wind farm is a very exciting opportunity for local communities as it creates the potential for an additional income stream for the lifetime of the project.

There are different ways that shared ownership can be realised in different regions. One of the most common is to create a model for sharing revenues from the operation of the wind farm with local communities.

Next steps

Should the project receive consent we will consult the community further and initiate more detailed conversations about how community benefit and potentially, shared ownership can be delivered to meet community needs and priorities.

Our commitment to the local area

Buckie High School - STEM workshop.

Vattenfall's approach

We are committed to maximising the benefit from our projects and investing in the local community. This approach is one we take from design and development, through construction and into operation. Our investment in local communities comes in many forms. Community benefit packages, skills, training and education programmes, sponsorship, shared ownership and benefits in kind are most common.

Supporting the younger generation

Young Person's Guarantee

Vattenfall is signed up to the Young Person's Guarantee and proud to be working with Developing the Young Workforce Moray to explore ways in which we can help support local schools and education initiatives.

Working with local schools

We recently held STEM workshops for around 70 pupils at Buckie High School and Keith Grammar to help them build employability skills. The sessions involved students working in project teams to study maps and identify planning constraints before creating and exploring a 3D visualisation of their wind farm design using specialised Virtual Reality (VR) software and VR headsets. Students also undertook financial modelling for their project and were coached on presentation skills.

Working with the local supply chain

We are committed to working closely with the local supply chain and maximising the opportunities for local contractors to get involved during the construction and operation of our wind farms. If you're a Moray contractor and interested in opportunities to work with Vattenfall on our Scottish onshore wind portfolio please get in touch using the details below.

We are also a proud member of Moray Chamber of Commerce.

MORAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBER

Vattenfall apprenticeship scheme

Vattenfall has a strong onshore wind pipeline in Scotland over the next 5 years and recently announced plans to develop an onshore wind apprenticeship programme for Scotland that would secure 50 apprenticeships by 2030, subject to planning consent.

To achieve this we will be working closely with Tier 1 and Tier 2 contractors with the aim of securing 10 apprenticeships for each of our Scottish onshore wind projects. Aultmore is one of the developments that would be considered as part of this initiative should it receive consent. If you would like further information on this please let us know.

We're aiming to create 50 apprenticeships by 2030

Celebrating Moray and Banffshire Heroes

Vattenfall is also a proud sponsor of this year's **Green Community Venture Award** which celebrates groups that are actively involved in the community to promote sustainable practices and environmental awareness.

Contact us: If you have any questions regarding our redesigned Aultmore Wind Farm proposal or would like further information on the project please get in touch with our project team at **aultmore.windfarm@vattenfall.com**.

Lucy Blake – Project Manager for Aultmore Wind Farm

1 www.renewableuk.com/page/UKWEDExplained/Statistics-Explained.htm

2 Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) – Volume 2, Chapter 15, section 15.1.8.

3 Scottish Government guidance is 'to continue at a national level to promote community benefits of the value equivalent to £5,000 per installed megawatt per annum, index linked for the operational lifetime of the project.' Turbine numbers and technology (as well as Scottish Government guidance on community benefit) can change, which means that the community benefit figure may go up or down. The final figure will be confirmed when (and if) the project receives consent. More information can be found in the Scottish Government's 'Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments'.

4 The business rates figure of £1.3 million is an estimate of the business rates payable based on the anticipated uplift in rateable value (the valuation of the wind farm) at the 2029 revaluation, multiplied by the Scottish Uniform Business Rate which has been increased in line with inflation.

5 https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/

6 https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/carbon-dioxide/

7 https://www.cop28.com/en/global-renewables-and-energy-efficiency-pledge

8 https://climate.copernicus.eu/copernicus-2024-world-experienced-warmest-january-record

9 https://www.gov.scot/publications/onshore-wind-policy-statement-2022/pages/16/

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